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# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

20 WEST 40TH STREET, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

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Please direct reply to:

WASHINGTON BUREAU NAACP  
100 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.  
Washington 1, D. C.  
Telephone National 5794

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July 24, 1947

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt  
29 Washington Square West  
New York 11, New York

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

The 38th Annual Conference of the NAACP was a splendid success. I am enclosing a copy of a report I submitted for our Department to the delegates. In addition, there is also attached a copy of the Labor Resolutions. I am glad to say the delegates were unanimous in their support of the resolution against the Taft Hartley Law.

The next meeting of the Labor Committee will be in October and I will notify you of the time and place during that month. If you have a date which would be more convenient for you, please let me know when you have an opportunity to do so.

Because you are so busy, I do not know whether you plan a vacation this summer, but, if you do, I trust it will be restful and refreshing.

Cordially yours,

*Clarence Mitchell*  
mbh  
Clarence Mitchell  
Labor Secretary

Enclosures

CMH:mbh

REPORT OF NAACP LABOR DEPARTMENT  
AT THE 38TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D. C.

June 26, 1947

The NAACP's Labor Department was established one year ago. Important national leaders are members of its advisory committee. In quarterly meetings, this committee has been charting broad strategy on labor legislation, employment problems, and matters on which there can be mutual NAACP and labor cooperation. A basic Manual of Operations is now available for the guidance of branch labor committees. For the record it should be stated that branch labor committees are established by the Constitution.

Discrimination in Government

The pattern of racial discrimination in the Federal Government is appalling. Some of the cases we have handled during the last twelve months are as follows:

Approximately twenty colored workers, who had been transferred to the Federal Trade Commission from the Office of Price Administration in January, 1947, were refused employment solely because of their race. At a conference arranged by the NAACP Labor Department with the Federal Trade Commission and the United Public Workers, Mr. Garland S. Ferguson, FTC Chairman, agreed that this discriminatory policy would cease.

After our intervention, during the month of May, the Chicago Regional Office of the U. S. Weather Bureau agreed to hire as a meteorological aide an applicant who had been denied employment in one of the installations. The Bureau had previously expressed the fear that pilots would object to receiving weather information from a colored man.

In the general wave of discriminatory practices in Washington, sixty colored taxicab drivers who daily reported to the Pentagon faced the loss of this source of income because the Public Buildings Administration had decided to oust them and give the hacking privilege to a single company. The NAACP's action in their behalf resulted in the Public Buildings Administration's withdrawal of its plan. These drivers are continuing their service.

The NAACP Labor Department is presently working on the problem of seventeen colored applicants, including disabled veterans, who have been denied employment in the New Orleans Post Office. One applicant, a former Marine, has an average of 100.2, while the others are in the high 80 and 90 brackets.

We called to the attention of the War Department the complaint of a colored advanced electricity instructor for the Army Air Forces in Japan. This resulted in an investigation which corrected practices of segregation in the dining hall where he was stationed in Japan. In retaliation, however, the Command at the field refused to renew his contract and shipped him home. We are seeking his reinstatement.

Because discrimination in government employment is so widespread, any attack upon it must be made with the full approval of the President. Therefore, we have asked that there be established by executive order a temporary fair employment practice commission in government. This body would function until the Congress

establishes a permanent fair employment practice commission. It is important that something be done in this interim period because agencies have new powers in the hiring of applicants and currently employment is shifting from wartime temporary arrangements to the regular permanent Civil Service System.

### Anti-Labor Legislation

We have been among the leaders of national organizations fighting against anti-labor legislation in this session of Congress. We opposed these bills in our testimony before the Senate Labor Committee and furnished each member of the House and Senate Labor Committees with copies of the NAACP's regional conference resolutions against such bills. We urged President Truman to veto the Taft-Hartley Bill. This legislation makes possible suits in the Federal Court against labor unions, undermines union security and seriously interferes with the internal regulations of labor organizations. In short it wipes out most of the gains of labor under the Wagner Act. The branches have also urged their Representatives in Congress to support the President's veto.

### Private Employment

Building Trades - We have been pushing for the inclusion of colored workers in the construction industry and apprenticeship training. This program will be measurably weakened by the so-called economy drive in Congress which at this writing has wiped out the racial relations advisors in the National Housing Administration. These men are an important link in the NAACP's effort to obtain full use of all skilled colored building tradesmen.

Telephone Operators - Many of the complaints against telephone companies filed with the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice were submitted by branches of our organization. It was logical that a major objective of the Association's labor program would be a continuation of this effort. Six operators are now employed in the telephone exchange at Trenton, New Jersey because of a change in hiring policy brought about by the local NAACP labor committee. In spite of such instances, there are still far too many cities in which advertisement for operators means white only. The fact that experience is meaningless was demonstrated recently when a trained operator formerly employed in Atlantic City came to Washington but was denied employment because of her race. Although the telephone companies have hired operators in such states as New York, Massachusetts, New York, Michigan and California they have resisted our efforts in border areas and the South.

### Trade Unions

The NAACP has offered advice and assistance to the representatives of two labor organizations whose members are seeking ways to eliminate segregated locals and other Jim Crow practices. We are glad to report also that the AFL this year distributed model state fair employment practice bills to a number of areas. It is well known of course that the CIO also has a model bill of this kind. This will unquestionably help the movement for a national fair employment practice law.

When the New York State Commission Against Discrimination announced that a number of unions, which are commonly thought of as following discriminatory practices

against colored persons, had been approached and agreed to cease such practices, we urged the New Jersey and Massachusetts Commissions to follow the New York example. It is recognized that there is a long step between promise and practice but it is important that the promise be given.

#### United States Employment Service

Private agencies can never hope to reach the masses of workers who should be given assistance in finding jobs. This is the duty of the United States Employment Service and the state offices which are supported by federal funds. For this reason, the NAACP has been working for a number of years to correct discriminatory practices of the employment service offices.

On September 11, Secretary Schwollenbach of the Department of Labor met with organizations and labor groups who at the NAACP's request had joined us in asking for the conference. We proposed that in the transfer of the employment service offices back to the states the Department of Labor establish certain standards including provisions against the acceptance of discriminatory orders or the establishment of segregated offices. The Secretary, at this conference, announced for the first time that the Department of Labor would abandon practices of segregation at the United States Employment Service office in the District of Columbia. He declined to set up similar standards for the states. We then took the matter to the governors of the states and obtained some commitments. However, only in Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York was it agreed that discriminatory orders would not be accepted.

When the Department of Labor's appropriation was severely cut by Congress, we appeared before the Senate Appropriations Committee to ask for a restoration of this cut and cited the discriminatory practices of the state offices as an example of the need for broader federal control than now exists. We also asked that a provision prohibiting the use of funds in the states for operating segregated offices or accepting discriminatory orders be incorporated in the legislation.

#### Agriculture

The National Labor Committee of the NAACP is exploring the problems of farm workers who will be displaced by the increasing mechanization of agriculture. We are also working with the Farm Labor Union of the A.F. of L. and other organizations in behalf of migratory agricultural workers. We have joined in the opposition to H. R. 3367, which is a bill primarily for the benefit of the large farmers, although it purports to be for the "effective use of agricultural workers." This bill would remove the farm placement service from the national employment system and thereby increase the exploitation of farm laborers by those employers who always try to keep wages low by having on hand more workers than are necessary. It makes possible the purchase of certain existing housing facilities by large land owners, but does not make provision for such purchases by cooperative groups of employers or local communities. It makes possible the continued importation of foreign agricultural workers even though the native supply may be under utilized.



Branch Action

Labor Committees in the local branches are becoming increasingly active. Los Angeles is in a dual drive to save jobs of girls employed by the Owl Drug chain and to open new opportunities in other fields. This committee has announced its intention to get 5000 new NAACP members from the ranks of the AFL and CIO.

St. Louis has recently completed an investigation of charges of employment discrimination involving a government hospital.

Dallas is engaged in an employment survey of the community.

The Baltimore Branch spearheaded a drive which netted approximately \$3,000 for the relief of colored strikers in retail stores.

Many southern branches have implemented with their active support the 1946 Cincinnati Conference pledge to aid the AFL and CIO organizing drives in the South.

Respectfully submitted,

Clarence Mitchell  
Labor Secretary

Labor Resolutions Passed at the 38th Annual Conference

1. Federal and state fair employment practice legislation is now more urgently needed than ever. Increasing discrimination in private employment and the federal government itself places upon the members of this Congress the responsibility of enacting a strong federal law. Senate Bill No. 984 represents the minimum in acceptable legislation. We oppose the proposal of Senator Alexander Smith of New Jersey which would exempt certain states from complying with the full requirements of a federal law. We shall also work for the passage of state fair employment practice legislation, and the strengthening of existing legislation.
2. The Taft-Hartley anti-labor law is an incredible attack upon the rights of organized labor. It is false and misleading to consider any part of this measure as beneficial to colored people. We instruct the Labor Department of this Association to give its full support to plans and programs for the repeal of this law.
3. The ever growing problems of migratory farm workers demand constructive action by the Congress. The Labor Department of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is instructed to work for the passage of legislation which will make adequate provisions for the orderly recruitment, housing, health, and other requirements of farm workers. We oppose continued importation of foreign agricultural workers when large supplies of unused agricultural laborers are available.
4. The increasing mechanization of agriculture will result in extended displacement of workers. The Labor Department is directed to continue its study of this problem and make plans with other interested organizations for the purpose of giving maximum assistance to such displaced persons. Farm laborers need the benefits of minimum wage legislation which they do not now enjoy; they need social security legislation for workmen's compensation, old age pensions, and unemployment insurance which they do not now have; and they need protection in their rights to organize such as is given to industrial workers. We pledge our support to the efforts made to organize farm laborers and to all attempts to win legislative advantages for them such as those outlined.
5. We reaffirm our support of collective bargaining and democratic trade unions, and we call on all our members who are eligible to do so to join a union and take an active part in its affairs. We welcome the support which organized labor has given to many of the measures in which we are interested. We will support every effort made within the ranks of labor to get rid of the color bar in those unions where it still exists. We also support to the full the policy of our legal department to oppose the color bar by court action.

- The United States Employment Service must be returned to federal control. We condemn and shall work to eliminate practices of segregation and the acceptance of discriminatory job orders by local offices of the state employment services.
7. The rising cost of living has dramatized the problem of underpaid workers. We support legislation for increasing the minimum wage level. This legislation should be extended to include agricultural and domestic workers.
  8. We favor legislation to strengthen and improve our Social Security system in the following ways:
    - a. An increase in the minimum benefits for both unemployment insurance and old age pensions in keeping with the increased cost of living.
    - b. Federalizing the unemployment insurance system so as to avoid the crazy quilt of 50 separate systems of unemployment insurance and to guarantee greater justice in administration to our members in states where Negroes are denied effective political influence.
    - c. Extension of the benefits of unemployment insurance and old age pensions to persons now excluded, such as seamen, government employees, employees of charitable and educational institutions, domestic workers and farm workers.
    - d. Provision of cash benefits and medical and hospital care to people who cannot work because of sickness or non-industrial accidents, through a system of health insurance which will permit patients to choose their doctors and vice versa.
  9. This organization takes notice of the problems of workers from Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands who are brought to the states for household employment. As citizens of the United States these individuals have the right of free movement. However, there must be adequate safeguards to prevent them from being exploited by unscrupulous employment agencies and employers. The Labor Secretary is instructed to consult with the U. S. Department of Labor and other interested agencies on ways of meeting this problem.
  10. We urge the President to create by executive order a temporary agency to take effective steps to remedy discrimination in agencies of the federal government pending the establishment of an FEPC by Congress.